

AANT 108 – Introduction to Cultural Anthropology  
Summer 2010, #1900

MTWThF 11:00AM – 12:20PM, AS 0015

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Office: 233 Arts & Sciences  
Office Hours: Monday-Thursday 1:30pm to  
2:30pm & by appointment

**Course Description:**

This course offers a broad introduction to cultural anthropology, one of four fields of American Anthropology. Cultural anthropology seeks to understand cultural diversity or differences in the way that humans categorize and understand their lives. When we focus on difference, we can begin to understand beliefs and behaviors that are different from our own, and the fact that there is great divergence of everyday expressions and societal norms and values. This is an essential skill in a world that is at once increasingly global and yet made “smaller” through ease of communication, transportation and shared bodies of popular cultural knowledge such as music, television and film, religious beliefs and political movements. Lectures, readings, films, guest speakers and class discussions will all be incorporated into this course in order to convey in a variety of ways the basic concepts, theories and assumptions regarding culture, ethnicity, race, kinship and gender in cross-cultural perspective.

Cultural anthropology has both academic and applied dimensions, and we will also explore what cultural anthropologists do, asking how anthropologists come to understand the precepts and assumptions by which different societies are organized. What are the concerns and viewpoints of cultural anthropologists? What are some of the debates that emerge around ethics and scientific practice?

Cultural anthropology provides tools for making sense of the experience of people whose lives are different from our own, and a central goal of this course is to learn to understand, appreciate, and respect cultural difference and diversity. At the same time, anthropology allows us to cast our familiar world in a new perspective by questioning our own “common-sense” understandings about the world around us.

There are three class objectives; exams and papers will be related to them:

- a. Learn what anthropologists do and how to think like one;
- b. Learn why anthropology is relevant in today’s world; and
- c. Learn about the cultural ways of a variety of different groups of people.

Our readings illustrate some of the diversity of subject matter and geographical area that cultural anthropologists deal with. These readings convey differences and similarities in approaches and to the practice of anthropology/ethnography. Our goal is to see anthropology not only as a discipline, but as a way of seeing, being in, and understanding the world.

The course satisfies the following General Education Categories: **CH-GLOBAL:DP-SOCSCI**.

See: <http://www.albany.edu/gened/>

**Course Materials:**

Omohundro, John (2008) *Thinking Like an Anthropologist: A Practical Introduction to Cultural Anthropology*. McGraw-Hill. ISBN: 978-007-319580-3. **(Identified as TLO throughout the syllabus)**

Boulanger, Claire, ed. (2008) *Reflecting on America: Anthropological Views of U.S. Culture*. Allyn & Bacon. ISBN: 978-020-548143-9. **(Identified as ROA throughout the syllabus)**

Additional Readings will be posted on Blackboard. **(Identified as BB throughout the syllabus)**

## Course Requirements:

Midterm Exam	100 points
Final Exam	100 points
Essays	160 points
Reading Quizzes	20 points
Participation	60 points
In class assignments	20 points
HTS Debate Project	40 points
<b>Total:</b>	<b>500 points</b>

Grading follows the traditional scale:

90-100 = A, 80-89 = B, 70-79 = C, 60-69 = D,  
below 59 = E

+ and - will be determined at the time that final grades are assigned, and are influenced heavily by actively participating in the class (or not).

Grades will be assigned on the basis on performance on two exams, four essays, reading/film quizzes, in class assignments and participation in discussion sections and a Public Anthropology project.

### 1. Exams (100 points each)

There will be **two equally weighted exams** during the term. These will be multiple-choice exams pertaining to the readings, lectures or films shown in class. The goal is not to memorize definitions but to think about them within various contexts and practical applications. **It is expected that no make-up exams will have to be given.** However, if there should arise some unusual circumstance which requires you to miss an exam, you are required to let me know of the situation as soon as possible, and to provide a written and verifiable excuse. **Make up exams will be in essay form.**

### 2. Reflection Essays (40 points each)

You are responsible for completing and handing in **FOUR** essays on weekly topics. You may choose which articles, debates and films you wish to respond to, and each review must be handed in the Tuesday after the week the article is assigned.

Essays must be 3-4 double-spaced pages, well-written, edited and cohesive. I require one-inch margins and 12-point font – Times New Roman is suggested. Proper citation of all material is a must. In a given week, you must engage all of the readings (Omohundro and all debates or articles, comparing, contrasting and anthropologically evaluating debates or issues.) Your essay should briefly summarize the positions taken by the author, as well as the primary evidence they use to support their position. You must then state an opinion of the article, **using material from the Omohundro textbook to support your argument.** If you write on a week during which multiple articles have been assigned, you must summarize the main arguments of the articles **and discuss how they relate to specific points or key concepts in the assigned Omohundro chapter.** If there is a film shown during the week, please relate it to the themes you are writing about. Outside sources and engagement with current events (properly cited), are welcome. I do not insist on a particular style of citation (ie: MLA, APA), but we do insist that you cite your sources carefully.

### 3. Reading/Film Quizzes (2 points each)

Short reading and film quizzes will be given throughout the term. More than 10 quizzes will be given, however only 10 will be counted toward your grade. There is **NO OPPORTUNITY to make up a reading quiz.**

### 4. In Class Assignments (20 points)

These papers are short written responses to a question or questions posed during a lecture. I may ask you to identify a main concept, comment on how a film seen in class illustrates a concept from the readings, ask you to use class discussions to think about a current event or pose a question left unanswered by the lecture. There is **NO OPPORTUNITY to make up an in-class assignment.**

### 5. Participation in class discussions (60 points)

You are required to regularly attend and to actively participate in discussions. This means: (a) complete readings by the day they are assigned, (b) ask questions and contribute relevant thoughts and comments regarding lectures and readings, and (c) complete written assignments on the days they are due. You do not start the class with 60 participation points. You must earn them throughout the term.

## 6. Human Terrain System Op-Ed (40 points)

This assignment encourages you to consider ethical issues that lie at the interface of anthropology and the contemporary world, as well as improving critical thinking and writing skills. This semester, you will write Op-Eds – or opinion pieces of roughly two to five hundred words – to key individuals encouraging them to take steps toward resolving the ethical issue addressed in the project. This assignment has multiple parts, and your grade is based on completion of each one:

- a. Do some preliminary research to find out what the HTS is and what the debates surrounding it are. You will then turn in a preliminary draft of your Op-Ed (June 4<sup>th</sup>).
- b. Drafts will be given to different students for a peer-review process. During this time the reviewer will read the draft, make comments and suggestions, and return it (June 14<sup>th</sup>).
- c. You will be given your draft with the reviewer's commentary and will then start revisions. This will help you to prepare for the HTS Debate (June 29<sup>th</sup>).
- d. Finally, a polished version of your Op-Ed will be submitted on the last day of class (July 2<sup>nd</sup>).

### Classroom Policies and Etiquette:

- All assignments will be submitted via Blackboard and your grades for them will be available to you there. PowerPoint presentations will not be posted on Blackboard, as they are meant to supplement your notes. I encourage you to contact other students via the discussion forum in Blackboard to ask questions on any material you miss.
- This class will emphasize discussion, participation, and sharing of different perspectives. While dissent from the prevailing notions presented in the readings and class discussions is accepted (and even encouraged!), it must be expressed in a manner respectful to the authors we are reading and to other members of the class.
- No electronic devices are necessary for successful participation in class discussion, nor are they permitted. Please do not text, type, talk, etc...during the class unless it pertains to the week's topic and is something you would like to discuss with the class as a whole.
- This class runs from 11:00am to 12:30pm. This means that the professor is entitled to use the entire class time to present information, and it is therefore unacceptable for students to interrupt the lecture and discussion by shuffling papers, packing book bags, and other similarly disruptive activities associated with the end of class.
- Plagiarism is the use of another person's thoughts, ideas, and language without giving proper credit to the author. This is a grave breach of academic ethics and is, in effect, intellectual theft. **All cases of plagiarism in this class will be dealt with in strict accordance with university policy.** Other instances of academic dishonesty include cheating, multiple submission, forgery, sabotage, falsification, unauthorized collaboration, and bribery. It is the student's responsibility to know and to adhere to appropriate standards of academic integrity. If you are unsure what plagiarism is, take the tutorial: <http://library.albany.edu/usered/plagiarism/index.html>. The university policy on academic dishonesty can be found here: [http://www.albany.edu/undergraduate\\_bulletin/regulations.html](http://www.albany.edu/undergraduate_bulletin/regulations.html)
- Lastly, your success in this class is my main objective for the semester. Should you experience unexpected academic, personal, or work related issues that affect your participation in the class please contact me right away. I will not always be able to accommodate you; however the earlier you discuss the situation with me the more likely I will be able to assist.

**CLASS SCHEDULE**

#	DATE	TOPIC	ASSIGNMENTS	READING	NOTES
1	5/24	Course introduction: You, me, and us		ANT 108 Syllabus TLO – Using This Book, The Anthropological Questions	
2	5/25	What is Cultural Anthropology?		TLO – Chapter 1: What is Culture? The Conceptual Question	
3	5/26	Discussion #1		BB – Miner, Horace “Body Ritual Among the Nacirema” ROA – Boulanger, Claire “Usans: The Real People Confront Globalization”	
4	5/27	Anthropological Theory and Methods		TLO – Chapter 2: How Do I Learn About Culture? The Naturalistic Question	
5	5/28	Conflict	QUIZ	Human Terrain System Discussion ROA – Lutz, “Fort Bragg on the Verge of a New Century”	
<b>WEEK 2</b>					
6	6/1	Anthropology as a Holistic Approach	REFLECTION ESSAY 1	TLO – Chapter 3: What is the Context for This Practice or Idea? The Holistic Question	
7	6/2	Discussion #2	QUIZ	BB – Lee, “Eating Christmas in the Kalahari.” ROA – Grebinger, “The Button: Not a Simple Notion”	
8	6/3	Making Connections		TLO – Chapter 4: Do Other Societies Do Something Like This? The Comparative Question	
9	6/4	Understanding Usans	QUIZ HTS DRAFT	BB – Ehrenreich, “Nickel and Dimed: On Not Getting By in America” Film: Wal-Mart: the High Cost of Low Prices	
<b>WEEK 3</b>					
10	6/7	Historically Speaking	QUIZ	TLO – Chapter 5: What Was This Idea or Practice Like in the Past? The Temporal Question	
11	6/8	Tourism and Heritage	REFLECTION ESSAY 2		

#	DATE	TOPIC	ASSIGNMENTS	READING	NOTES
12	6/9	Discussion #3	QUIZ	ROA – Amster, “A Pilgrimage to the Past” ROA – Michrina, “Mining History”	
13	6/10	The Environment and Anthropology		TLO – Chapter 6: How are Human Biology, Culture, and Environment Interacting? The Bio-cultural Question	
14	6/11		MID TERM EXAM		
WEEK 4					
15	6/14	The Environment, con’t.	QUIZ HTS DRAFT REVIEW	ROA – Burton, “Consuming New Hampshire’s Nature: Changing Views of the White Mountains”	
16	6/15	Kinship, Family, and Social Structure	REFLECTION ESSAY 3	TLO – Chapter 7: What Are the Groups and Relationships? The Social-structural Question	
17	6/16	Discussion #4	QUIZ	ROA – di Leonardo, “The Female World of Cards and Holidays”	
18	6/17	How do you Know?		TLO – Chapter 8: What Does That Mean? The Interpretive Question	
19	6/18	Dealing with Data	QUIZ	BB – Guest, “All You Can Eat Buffets and Chicken with Broccoli to Go”	
WEEK 5					
20	6/21	The Human Factor	QUIZ	TLO – Chapter 9: What is My Perspective? The Reflexive Question	
21	6/22	Understanding Branding	REFLECTION ESSAY 4 LABEL SHOW AND TELL	ROA – Wilk, “Consuming America” ROA – Durrenberger, “Explorations of Class and Consciousness in the U.S.”	
22	6/23	Discussion #5	QUIZ	ROA – Bourgois, “Welcome to an East Harlem Shooting Gallery”	

#	DATE	TOPIC	ASSIGNMENTS	READING	NOTES
23	6/24	Cultural Relativism		TLO – Chapter 10: Am I Judging This? The Relativistic Question	
24	6/25	Cultural Relativism, con't.	QUIZ	BB – Fleuhr-Lobban, “Cultural Relativism and Universal Human Rights” BB – Skinner, “Female Circumcision in Africa”	
WEEK 6					
25	6/28	Language and Thought	QUIZ	TLO – Chapter 11: What Do the People Say? The Dialogic Question	
26	6/29	Language and Thought, con't.	HTS DEBATE	ROA – Myers, “Gunspeak” BB – Rhodes, “Army Enlists Anthropology”	
27	6/30	Discussion #6	QUIZ	ROA – Myers, “ <i>Nuf</i> and <i>E-Nuf</i> among the Nacirema” BB – Linton, “100% American”	
28	7/1	Reading Day/Review			
29	7/2	Last Class	FINAL EXAM HTS OP-ED DUE		